

Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel Claims 1-7. The Claim Listing below will replace all prior versions of the claims in the application:

Claim Listing

1. Cancelled
2. Cancelled
3. Cancelled
4. Cancelled
5. Cancelled
6. Cancelled
7. Cancelled
8. (Previously Presented) In a cable television network system that connects set-top boxes (STBs) to receive video broadcast program content from cable network head end distribution points via a cable network, a method for delivery of a promotional content stream to the STBs, the system further comprising a promotion server subsystem that includes a promotion scheduler, a message routing server, and one or more message routers located at a central location, head ends comprising a head end router, a head end message server, a trigger inserter, a Video on Demand (VOD) streaming server, and Radio Frequency (RF) distribution equipment for distributing broadcast signals to the STBs, the head end message server connected to the message routing server via a data network, the method comprising the steps of:

- at the promotion server subsystem,
 - assigning a promotion asset to a list of specific STBs that are expected to receive the promotion asset;
 - creating a promotion schedule message (PSM) for each promotion and each particular STB scheduled to view that promotion, such that a PSM is created for each instance of a promotion to be viewed at a specific STB, each PSM indicating an identifier of the promotion, the specific STB, and a time by which the promotion is to be viewed on the STB;
 - sending the PSMs to the head ends via the data network;
- at the head end message server,
 - receiving a PSM;
 - sending a message to the VOD server, the message requesting playback of the promotion;
 - receiving, from the VOD server, an indication of a VOD channel number on which the indicated promotion will be played;
 - sending a plurality of messages to the specific STBs associated with the promotion, the message including an identifier for the promotion to be returned to the head end message server after the promotion is played back at the STB, but the message not indicating a VOD channel number;
 - at a later time, inserting an asset trigger in a broadcast signal sent to the STBs, the asset trigger indicating an identifier for the promotion and a VOD channel number, but the asset trigger not yet causing playback of the promotion;
 - at a still later time, detecting a commercial cue in a broadcast signal as received from a broadcast network, and in response thereto, sending a tune away trigger to the STBs;
 - at the STB,
 - upon receipt of the tune away trigger, tuning to the VOD channel that was indicated in the asset trigger, to cause the promotion to be displayed.

9. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 8 additionally comprising:

at the head end,
detecting a commercial end tone signal; and
sending a tune back trigger to the STBs;
at the STBs,
receiving a tune back trigger from the head end, indicating that playback of the promotion is complete.

10. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 9 additionally comprising:
after receiving the tune back trigger, reporting the identifier of the promotion to the head end server.